



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General

12 April 2018

Original: English

For decision

United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Board

Annual session 2018

11–14 June 2018

Item 9 of the provisional agenda*

Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF

Summary

The revised evaluation policy of UNICEF has been developed in accordance with Executive Board decision 2018/2. It presents the purpose and rationale for the revision; outlines evaluation principles and procedures; sets out key accountabilities for the function and use of evaluations; describes contributions to system-wide evaluations and national evaluation capacity development; highlights the human and financial resource requirements; and concludes with a note on the implementation, reporting and periodic review of the policy.

Elements of a decision: The Executive Board may wish to (a) welcome the preparation of the revised evaluation policy of UNICEF; and (b) endorse the revised evaluation policy.

* E/ICEF/2018/8.



I. Purpose, status and scope of the policy

1. The evaluation policy sets out the purpose and use of evaluation in UNICEF, provides definitions, norms and standards and outlines governance arrangements and accountabilities as well as performance standards for the evaluation function. It guides UNICEF staff and partners regarding the organization's requirements for the conduct and use of evaluations. The policy applies to all levels and parts of the organization.

2. The evaluation policy is aligned with the mission of UNICEF as defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UNICEF mission statement:¹ to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. At the core of that mission is a culture that uses evaluation for better performance, continuous improvement and strengthened accountability. The evaluation policy promotes and supports the development of that culture.

3. The evaluation policy is also aligned with the Charter of the United Nations² and humanitarian principles,³ with a commitment to human rights and gender equality. It is oriented to support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, responding to the call for rigorous evidence, informed by country-led evaluations that are high-quality, accessible, timely and reliable, and the requirements of the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR)⁴ and resolution 69/237 in which the General Assembly called for United Nations entities to support efforts to further strengthen national evaluation capacity development.

4. The evaluation policy is guided by the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and international good practices in evaluation, including for the evaluation of humanitarian assistance, such that evaluations are independent, impartial, credible and useful and that evaluation processes are transparent and fully engaged with stakeholders.

II. Rationale for a revised policy

5. Since the endorsement of the 2013 revised evaluation policy of UNICEF,⁵ the environment in which the organization operates has changed significantly. The landscape in which evaluations are conducted has been transformed by wide-ranging global accords, including those on sustainable development (2030 Agenda); disaster risk reduction (Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030); climate change (Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change); and financing for development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development). The 2016 QCPR emphasizes the importance of strengthening national evaluation capacities and United Nations joint and system-wide evaluations. Together with efforts to strengthen the delivery of humanitarian action and the reform agenda on repositioning the United Nations development system, the resolutions and accords provide key directions for the scope of and approaches to evaluation going forward.

¹ Available from www.unicef.org/about/who/index_mission.html.

² United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 24 October 1945, Chapter IX, art. 55 c.

³ General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 58/114.

⁴ Resolution 71/243.

⁵ E/ICEF/2013/14.

6. The UNICEF evaluation function is also necessary to help guide the work of UNICEF in the coming years as its strategic plans are rolled out in support of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially for course corrections.

7. Evaluation norms and standards and related methods and approaches are enhanced on a continual basis to address emerging needs. The revised UNICEF evaluation policy reflects the 2016 updated norms and standards of UNEG⁶ and standards for evaluating humanitarian assistance.⁷

8. The conclusions of recent reviews of the UNICEF evaluation function, including a peer review,⁸ provide an indication of how evaluation in UNICEF might respond to the evolving demands and expectations. Key to that response is an evaluation policy that supports the development of an organization-wide evaluation function that encompasses the work of UNICEF at the global, regional and country levels and upholds UNEG norms and standards, including utility, credibility and independence.

9. The revisions to the evaluation policy are intended to support UNICEF in delivering the outputs of the theory of change for evaluation outlined in the annex: independent, credible and useful evaluations at the corporate, regional and country levels, delivered in line with UNEG norms and standards and the coverage norms of the evaluation policy (supported by enhancing the capacity and professionalism of UNICEF staff to conduct and manage evaluations and national evaluation capacity development); effective knowledge management of evaluation evidence and collaboration with other functions in UNICEF and partners to enhance learning from evaluations; demand generated for evaluation evidence and its use within UNICEF and by the Executive Board and partners. These outputs will support the delivery of the theory-of-change outcome: reinforcing the systematic use of evaluation evidence for learning, decision-making and accountability, guiding the effective design and implementation of programmes in UNICEF and supporting decision-making by partners for improved child well-being. This will support the theory-of-change impact: UNICEF and its partners deliver effectively on attaining the Sustainable Development Goals and the Strategic Plan targets for the realization of the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged.

III. Definition and purpose of evaluation

10. UNICEF follows the UNEG definition of evaluation as “an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using such appropriate criteria as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders”.⁹

⁶ United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). Norms and standards for evaluation (2016).

⁷ See https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/tabe_guidelines.pdf.

⁸ Development Assistance Committee/UNEG peer review of the evaluation function of UNICEF, July 2017; Joint Inspection Unit, Analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2014/6); Multinational Organization Performance Assessment Network, Institutional assessment of UNICEF (2016).

⁹ UNEG, Norms and standards for evaluation (2016), p. 10.

11. Evaluation in UNICEF serves interrelated purposes in support of the organization's mandate. It supports learning and decision-making,¹⁰ which in turn support better results for children. Evaluation also helps to hold UNICEF accountable for contributing to results for children, or for not doing so. The evaluation function supports the development of national evaluation capacity, undertaken in collaboration with Member States and entities of the United Nations system, which should enhance the provision of timely evidence at the country level on the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the fulfilment of the rights of all children.

IV. Evaluation norms and standards

12. To fulfil their purpose in UNICEF, evaluations should meet international norms and standards, including those of UNEG. Provisions in place for upholding the UNEG norms are outlined in table 1. Standards for evaluation are broadly outlined in section V; the Evaluation Office will prepare detailed guidance on these for the conduct of evaluations in UNICEF.

¹⁰ Including decision-making for policy development, strategic planning and programme improvement.

Table 1
Provisions in UNICEF for upholding the norms of the United Nations Evaluation Group

Provisions in UNICEF for upholding UNEG norms	
United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) general norms	Regional offices, country offices
Independence The Director of Evaluation prepares and submits to the Executive Board an independent plan for global evaluations and an independent annual report on the evaluation function in UNICEF. The Director of Evaluation is appointed by the Executive Director in consultation with the Executive Board and the Audit Advisory Committee.¹¹ Reports directly to the Executive Director, and heads an independent evaluation function in UNICEF.	Plans for evaluations at the corporate, regional and country levels should directly contribute to evidence for the realization of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Sustainable Development Goals and other relevant internationally agreed goals. Terms of reference should include provisions for the timely commissioning and conduct of evaluations and the dissemination of findings, and should specify the intended use of the evaluation and the intended users of evaluation results. All evaluations must have a management response produced in accordance with timelines set out in guidance issued by the Evaluation Office. The Evaluation Office monitors and reports on the implementation status of management responses.
Utility All staff with evaluation responsibilities undergo training in evaluation methods, integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations, results-based management, report writing and analysis. A stakeholder reference group and/or a technical expert group that includes an independent stakeholder is established at the start of an evaluation. The Evaluation Office provides quality assurance for evaluations undertaken at the regional level.	A stakeholder reference group that includes the regional evaluation adviser and/or a participant external to UNICEF is established at the start of an evaluation. Regional evaluation advisers provide quality assurance for evaluations undertaken at the country level. Regional evaluation advisers, in consultation with the Evaluation Office, provide quality assurance and technical support to country offices in development of costed evaluation plans (CEPs).
Credibility The Evaluation Office ensures the independent quality assessment of all evaluation reports.	Heads of offices ensure the application of the provisions of the evaluation policy in the conduct of evaluations at the respective levels of the organization.

¹¹ The job description for the position of Director of Evaluation and information on the recruitment process, including the composition and recommendation of the selection panel, will be shared with the Bureau of the Executive Board and the Audit Advisory Committee.

United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) general norms	Provisions in UNICEF for upholding UNEG norms	
Evaluation Office	Regional offices, country offices	
The budget for the Evaluation Office is approved by the Executive Board in the context of the UNICEF integrated budget. The Director of Evaluation has full discretion and control over the allocated resources. A pooled fund will be established to support evaluation capacity development, especially at the decentralized level, organization-wide professionalization, innovation in evaluation, and strategic evaluations. The evaluation of the UNICEF evaluation function is undertaken by an independent panel	The budget for the country-level CEP is approved by the Executive Board as part of the country programme document, whose budget includes resources earmarked for evaluations identified in the CEP. The financial framework accompanying annual or multi-year workplans of regional and country offices should include a line budget for evaluations.	
Impartiality The evaluation of corporate programmes and initiatives is undertaken by the Evaluation Office Headquarters divisions invest in activities that lay the foundations for evaluations, including the establishment of baselines, the testing of new initiatives or pilots for scaling up and the undertaking of programme reviews for the purpose of continuous improvement in delivery.	Country programme evaluations are managed by the regional evaluation adviser, with support from the Evaluation Office	Evaluation managers at all levels of the organization manage evaluations in line with the norms and standards set out in the evaluation policy Evaluations are undertaken by independent consultants/firms and dedicated evaluation staff from the Evaluation Office, or regional evaluation advisers
Ethics All evaluation managers and evaluators conform to the ethical standards, code of conduct and norms and standards for evaluation of UNEG All evaluation managers and evaluators conform to the UNICEF procedures for ethical standards, including those related to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment All evaluation consultants sign and uphold the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the United Nations system.¹² Risks, including potential conflicts of interest, are assessed before the selection of evaluation teams.		
Transparency		All completed evaluations are made publicly available in a timely manner,¹³ as are associated management responses when finalized, unless otherwise informed by the provisions set out in Executive Board decision 2012/13 involving instances that include endangering the security of individuals when a report is made available.¹⁴

¹² UNEG/FN/CoC (2008)

¹³ The Evaluation Office issues guidance on the timelines for quality assessment and evaluation management response

¹⁴ This provision is in line with those set out in Executive Board decision 2012/13 in relation to the UNICEF audit function. The annual report to the Executive Board on the evaluation function in UNICEF will note if any evaluations have been withheld or redacted.

United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEV) general norms	Provisions in UNICEF for upholding UNEG norms
Evaluation Office	Regional offices, country offices
Human rights and gender equality	Evaluation planning, design, methodology and analysis explicitly addresses human rights, gender equality and sustainability aspects of the programme or policy to be addressed Evaluation practice follows UNEG guidance on integrating human rights and gender equality.¹⁵ Key stakeholders, including girls and boys (when appropriate), women, marginalized groups, national partners and Governments, are engaged at relevant stages of the evaluation Evaluation methodology explicitly addresses issues of gender equality and the empowerment of women The quality assessment of evaluation reports includes an assessment against the criteria of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
National evaluation capacities	The plan for global evaluations and country-level CEPs include provisions for strengthening national evaluation capacities Evaluations are planned and conducted in partnership with national authorities, addressing issues relevant to the national agenda
Professionalism	Every UNICEF staff member responsible for managing evaluations¹⁶ undergoes basic training in upholding the norms and standards of the profession Evaluators should be recruited or contracted on the basis of their professional knowledge, skills and experience

¹⁵ UNEG, Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations (2014). Available from www.uneval.org/document/download/2107

¹⁶ Every evaluation has a designated manager (e.g., evaluation specialist or staff member in a country office whose functions include evaluation, a regional evaluation adviser, or an evaluation specialist in the Evaluation Office). In addition, any staff member who has a role in managing evaluations should receive training

V. Evaluation procedures and quality assurance

13. Evaluations should be properly planned, managed, effectively conducted and quality assured, and the quality of evaluation reports assessed systematically.

A. Evaluation planning

14. Evaluations should be adequately planned. Evaluation plans should contain an appropriate mix of evaluation types. Evaluation plans are prepared at various levels of the organization, specifically:

(a) The plan for global evaluations, a multi-year costed corporate evaluation plan, is prepared by the Evaluation Office and approved by the Executive Board in support of the UNICEF Strategic Plan and other corporate policies and strategies; it builds upon regional and multi-country evaluations and country-level evaluations and identifies the criteria for the selection and prioritization of corporate evaluations;

(b) Regional evaluation plans are prepared by regional offices for evaluating multi-country initiatives; they are costed, and build upon country-level evaluations and respond to the evaluation needs of the countries in the region;

(c) Country costed evaluation plans (CEPs) are prepared by country offices, with the participation of national Governments (General Assembly resolution 71/243, para. 48) and approved by the Executive Board concurrently with country programme documents (CPDs).

15. Evaluation plans should ensure the adequate coverage of evaluations, including in humanitarian situations, and appropriate preparation to ensure high quality. Plans should enable evaluations to respond to the critical challenges in the delivery of programmes; make provision for the timely delivery of products in accordance with decision-making schedules and programming cycles; and spell out how the use of findings and recommendations will be promoted.

16. Evaluations should yield evidence quickly enough to enable timely decision-making. Humanitarian evaluations should focus on yielding rapid and timely evidence to support decision-making in fast-changing humanitarian contexts. In the appropriate context, evaluations should address the connection between humanitarian and development programming.

B. Evaluation coverage

17. Adequate evaluation coverage is key to providing a representative, unbiased picture of UNICEF performance and ensuring that policies, strategies, programmes and advocacy are informed by relevant evidence at all levels of the organization. Table 2 outlines the expectations for evaluation coverage at the country, regional and corporate levels, along with responsibilities for evaluation management and quality assurance.

C. Management and conduct of evaluations

18. UNICEF is committed to excellence in evaluation and strives for rigour in the design, management and conduct of evaluations. Evaluations should be designed, conducted and managed in line with UNEG standards and those set out in the present policy. Staff responsible for designing, managing and conducting evaluations should conform to UNEG ethical standards. The Evaluation Office will ensure that staff

responsible for designing, managing and conducting evaluations have been trained in UNEG norms and standards and the ethics of the profession.

19. Provisions for upholding the UNEG norms in the management and conduct of evaluations are outlined in table 1. More-detailed steps for ensuring useful and credible evaluation results are:

(a) Management arrangements for each evaluation should ensure independence and impartiality. The designated evaluation manager should not be part of the team that designs and/or manages the implementation of the assessed policy, plan or programme. The designated evaluation manager supervises the selection of the evaluation team, manages the consultants and has the authority to hold them to a high standard of performance. The evaluation manager is ultimately responsible for the quality of the evaluation;

(b) Key stakeholders, including excluded groups and, as appropriate, children and young people, should be engaged at relevant points, starting with the design phase. The involvement of children and young people should follow appropriate ethical guidelines and requires approval in accordance with UNICEF procedure;¹⁷

(c) The evaluation team should be selected through an open, transparent process, with balance in terms of geographical and gender diversity, and should include professionals from the region or country concerned in the evaluation;

(d) Terms of reference should conform to UNEG standards, make provision for the eventual use of the evaluation and be shared with stakeholders to promote transparency and engagement;

(e) When deemed necessary by a preliminary risk assessment, an ethical review should be conducted by an objective, qualified body;

(f) The evaluation design and methods should be clearly presented in the inception report;

(g) The evaluation report should meet the reporting standards of UNICEF and, in the interest of accountability, be made publicly available.¹⁸

D. Quality assurance

20. Quality assurance should be undertaken for terms of reference, inception reports and evaluation reports and carried out by an external expert or staff member with no role in managing the evaluation. Regional offices provide quality assurance for evaluations managed by the country offices, and the Evaluation Office provides such services for those managed by the regional offices. The evaluation manager ensures that the appropriate entities carry out adequate quality assurance without incurring delays. Those entities providing quality assurance (i.e., regional offices and the Evaluation Office) are responsible for ensuring that recommendations for quality improvement are acted upon. The head of the office managing the evaluation signs off upon completion and presents it to the Evaluation Office for final quality assessment.

21. The quality of all evaluation reports is assessed by a specialist external to UNICEF. The Evaluation Office is responsible for ensuring that a credible quality-assessment process is established and that its results are shared with the commissioning office and made available to UNICEF management and the Executive Board. Periodically, the Office will undertake reviews of the quality-assessment system for all levels of the organization.

¹⁷ UNICEF procedure for ethical standards in research, evaluation, data collection and analysis (2015).

¹⁸ See footnote 14.

Table 2
Evaluation coverage norms

<i>Evaluation</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Evaluation manager</i>	<i>Quality assurance</i>	<i>Accountability for management response and use of evaluation results¹⁹</i>
Country programme evaluation	At least once every two programme cycles, sequenced to feed into subsequent country programme document and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) At least once per programme cycle if monitoring and audit information points to a significant shift in the programming context or a significant increase in the level of risk	Regional evaluation adviser	Evaluation Office	Representative, regional director
Country office-level thematic evaluations, including cross-cutting themes	At least one country thematic evaluation, country programme component evaluation or project evaluation per year for each country programme. For small country programmes, ²⁰ evaluation frequency may be reduced to three per programme cycle	Country office evaluation specialist/ staff member responsible for evaluation	Regional evaluation adviser/ external experts	Representative, regional director, division director
Evaluation of humanitarian action	Evaluation of level 1 (L1) emergencies must be included in country programme evaluations. Protracted L1 emergencies should be evaluated at least every three to five years. Short-term level 2 (L2) emergencies must be evaluated at least once. Protracted L2 emergencies should be evaluated once every three years. Short term level 3 (L3) emergencies must be evaluated at least once. Protracted L3 emergencies should be evaluated once every three years.	Country office evaluation specialist/ staff member responsible for evaluation Regional evaluation adviser Evaluation Office	Regional evaluation adviser Evaluation Office Evaluation Office/ external experts	Representative, regional director, division director Representative, emergency management team Representative, emergency management team
Corporate evaluations	Themes under each Strategic Plan Goal Area are to be evaluated during the Strategic Plan period, in accordance with the plan for global evaluations. Corporate evaluations will also focus on the cross-cutting priorities of the Strategic Plan, namely humanitarian action and gender equality, in their own right and as parts of thematic evaluations.	Evaluation Office	External experts	Deputy Executive Director, division director, regional director

¹⁹ This relates to those with direct responsibility for the preparation and implementation of the management response and the use of the evaluation, recognizing that the Executive Board and the Office of the Executive Director have overall oversight and use responsibilities.

²⁰ As defined by the Field Results Group in UNICEF, small country programmes are carried out by offices with an annual expenditure (programme and operations) below \$10 million.

<i>Evaluation</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Evaluation manager</i>	<i>Quality assurance</i>	<i>Accountability for management response and use of evaluation results^a</i>
	Strategic Plan change strategies and enablers are to be evaluated in accordance with the plan for global evaluations.	Evaluation Office	External experts	Deputy Executive Director, division director, regional director
Evalability assessments, evaluation syntheses, meta-evaluations	Coverage and frequency determined by commissioning office	Evaluation Office, regional evaluation adviser, country office evaluation specialist	Evaluation Office, regional evaluation adviser, external experts	Division director, regional director, representative
Reviews in support of policies, plans and strategies	Coverage and frequency determined by commissioning office	Headquarters divisions, regional offices, country offices	Evaluation specialists at relevant level	Representative, regional director, division director
Regional level multi-country evaluations	Coverage and frequency determined by the regional office	Regional evaluation adviser	External experts	Country representative, regional director, division director
Joint United Nations and system-wide evaluations, including UNDAFs and joint programmes and Strategic Plan common chapter	Coverage and frequency determined by interagency mechanism	Determined by inter-agency mechanism	Determined by inter-agency mechanism	Heads of United Nations entities, Governments, partners
Country-led evaluation	Coverage and frequency determined by partner Governments	Determined by Governments and partners	Determined by Governments and partners	Determined by Governments and partners

VI. Enhancing the use of evaluations

22. Evaluations that are not properly used represent wasted investment and missed opportunities for learning and improving performance. The use of evaluation findings and recommendations is driven by the examination of appropriate questions at the appropriate time. This means clearly linking country programme evaluations and multi-country evaluations to the country programme cycle; linking country-led evaluations to government planning cycles and the timing of advocacy initiatives; and linking corporate evaluations to the UNICEF planning and budgeting cycle and the mechanisms established by Member States to review progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Use is also dependent upon the credibility of the evaluation, which in turn is dependent upon rigour, impartiality and professionalism.

23. The use of evaluations is enhanced by the selection of the appropriate type of evaluation for the needs at hand. The Evaluation Office offers guidance on the appropriate types of evaluation for the diverse contexts in which UNICEF works and the diverse purposes of evaluation, including, for example, evaluability assessments, appropriate use of formative evaluation, as well as summative evaluations and syntheses.

24. Evaluation usage is also dependent upon the timely delivery of evaluations. Evaluations should be undertaken at the appropriate time to support decision-making and programme adjustments. The Director of Evaluation will provide guidance on improving the timeliness of evaluations, including those for fast-changing humanitarian contexts, and on the timing of country programme evaluations so that their findings can feed into the UNDAF and the next country programme. The quality of evaluation recommendations also has an impact on usage, and the Evaluation Office will provide guidance on improving them.

25. All levels of the evaluation system should invest in technologies to advance evaluation usage. Key to this is the effective communication and dissemination of evaluation results and syntheses. All evaluations should have a dissemination plan at the outset and, in accordance with UNEG guidance, evaluation reports and management responses should be made public. The demand for evaluation can be enhanced by the provision of evaluation results in forms that are usable by decision-makers, including, for example, communication tools tailored to their specific needs.

26. Evaluations are of limited value unless timely steps are taken to implement their recommendations and incorporate lessons into decision-making systems. UNICEF offices must prepare a formal management response to evaluation recommendations and make arrangements to maximize the use of evaluation results. Managers within UNICEF should also create opportunities to feed evaluation recommendations into key decisions taken in UNICEF offices. The Evaluation Office will maintain a system for management to record and report on the status of implementation of management response actions. For the purposes of accountability, the Office may periodically undertake an assessment of management response implementation throughout the organization. For the purposes of learning and continuous improvement, the Office will establish guidelines for iterative approaches to the evaluation of programmes. Table 2 spells out the levels of management expected to be key users of evaluations.

27. Knowledge management is a key aspect of institutional learning. The Evaluation Office creates syntheses of evaluation findings, issuing them as reports that are shared with the Executive Board and made public. Such syntheses may lead to thematic recommendations for the organization or, in the case of joint work, for multiple United Nations agencies.

VII. Complementarity with other accountability and learning functions

28. Evaluation is one of several distinct complementary functions, which include child rights monitoring, performance monitoring and broader results-based management, research and audit. These functions can support an enabling environment for evaluation and enhance the conduct of evaluations and their use. Data from monitoring and research informs evaluation; methods from research complement those used for evaluation; and audit findings help to shape evaluations and contribute to assessments of organizational efficiency. While maintaining its independence, evaluation in UNICEF will coordinate with those complementary functions.

29. The Evaluation Office coordinates its work with that of the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, in particular to inform the timing and frequency of country programme evaluations (see table 2). The Evaluation Office also coordinates the planning of evaluations with the research and data functions of the organization, with the objective of greater efficiency in the generation and use of evidence. The Evaluation Office will collaborate with divisions responsible for performance monitoring to ensure the periodic review of the quality of performance information that can inform evaluation.

VIII. Governance of evaluation

30. The UNICEF institutional architecture, which supports the implementation of the evaluation policy, is outlined below.

A. Executive Board

31. The Executive Board endorses the evaluation policy, considers annual reports on its implementation and on the status and effectiveness of the evaluation function and issues decisions conveying expectations and guidance on improving performance; approves CEPs as part of CPDs; approves the plan for global evaluations; and draws on the findings and recommendations of evaluations and evaluation syntheses for the purposes of governing the organization. As part of the approval of the integrated budget, the Board approves the budget of the Evaluation Office. The Executive Board is consulted by the Executive Director on the appointment of the Director of Evaluation.²¹

B. Executive Director

32. The Executive Director safeguards the integrity of the evaluation function; fosters a culture of learning, continuous improvement and accountability at all levels of the organization; creates demand for evaluation evidence; ensures that evaluation recommendations are acted upon; provides opportunities for the use of evidence; and supports the provision of the human and financial resources necessary for the evaluation function. The Executive Director consults the Executive Board and the Audit Advisory Committee on the appointment of the Director of Evaluation.

²¹ See footnote 11.

C. Audit Advisory Committee

33. The Audit Advisory Committee, which includes an external expert on evaluation, advises the Executive Director on matters pertaining to the oversight of the evaluation function, including on upholding the norms and standards set out in the evaluation policy. The Committee advises the Executive Director on the implementation of the evaluation policy, including on the role of the Evaluation Office in strengthening oversight and learning and the responsiveness of the management of the organization to evaluation. The Audit Advisory Committee is consulted by the Executive Director on the appointment of the Director of Evaluation.²²

D. Director of Evaluation

34. The UNICEF Director of Evaluation reports directly to the Executive Director, and heads an Evaluation Office that is functionally independent within the organization.

35. The Director of Evaluation is appointed by the Executive Director in consultation²³ with the Audit Advisory Committee and the Executive Board, with an external evaluation expert as part of the selection panel. The Director of Evaluation is appointed for a term of five years, renewable once for a maximum of five years, and is barred from re-entry into the organization after the expiry of his/her term.

36. The Director of Evaluation has accountability for the oversight of the evaluation function throughout UNICEF and leads the implementation of the evaluation policy within the organization, including through:

(a) Establishing and updating the evaluation policy; setting performance standards for evaluation across UNICEF and monitoring achievement against those standards; and providing an independent report annually to the Executive Board on the implementation of the evaluation policy;

(b) Preparing and periodically revising the plan for global evaluations, laying out strategic priorities for evaluation, identifying major corporate thematic evaluations to be undertaken independently by the Evaluation Office and ensuring adequate resources for the implementation of the plan and for support to the funding of evaluations and evaluation capacity development throughout the organization;

(c) Designing, commissioning and managing independent corporate evaluations that meet international standards for best practices and ensuring the timely dissemination of the results for action by management and other stakeholders;

(d) Establishing a comprehensive assessment system to gauge the performance of the evaluation function and the quality and coverage of UNICEF evaluations undertaken throughout the organization; ensuring that evaluations at all levels meet the standards set out in the evaluation policy; maintaining systems to monitor and report on management responses to evaluation recommendations and comprehensive databases to facilitate public access to all UNICEF evaluations and management responses; and informing the Executive Director and the UNICEF Global Management Team, staff and UNICEF stakeholders about relevant and useful evaluation results;

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

(e) Promoting the use of evaluations and knowledge management for evaluation, including through innovative approaches;

(f) Promoting strategies and systems to build internal evaluation capacity, including the technical review of candidates for evaluation positions; providing guidance and support to offices in designing and staffing the function and to staff in long-term career development; and implementing strategies to enhance the professionalization of the function;

(g) Developing and sharing innovative approaches and methodologies for evaluation work, particularly methods for improving the timeliness of evaluations;

(h) Promoting partnerships, especially by promoting the national ownership and leadership of evaluation activities; supporting global partnerships and networks and working through them to support innovation and evaluation capacity development; engaging with UNEG to harmonize evaluation norms and practices and to build United Nations evaluation capacity; and contributing to United Nations system-wide evaluations.

E. Evaluation Advisory Panel

37. The Evaluation Advisory Panel is an independent, external body, appointed by the Executive Director, that advises the Director of Evaluation on the implementation of the evaluation policy, the plan for global evaluations and other global policy documents; recommends improvements to evaluation methodologies, procedures, quality-assurance mechanisms and management responses; and recommends innovative ways to speed up the conduct and use of evaluations, including improvements to knowledge-sharing and dissemination.

F. Global Evaluation Committee

38. The Global Evaluation Committee creates opportunities for the use of evaluation evidence and follows up on the implementation of management responses. The Committee, which meets at least three times per year, is chaired by a Deputy Executive Director, as assigned by the Executive Director, with membership comprising all other Deputy Executive Directors, relevant divisional directors, the Director of Internal Audit, the Director of the Office of Research and all regional directors.

G. Headquarters division directors

39. The headquarters division directors support activities that enable evaluations, including establishing baselines and testing new initiatives or pilots for scaling up; undertaking programme reviews for continuous improvement in delivery; ensuring access to data and information for evaluations and the timely preparation and implementation of management responses to evaluations; promoting the use of evaluation results for decision-making and improved programming and operations; and supporting evaluation capacity development.

H. Regional directors

40. At the regional level, the regional directors ensure the upholding of the evaluation policy norms and standards in the management and conduct of evaluations, the timely preparation of evaluations and management responses and access to data

and information. They also oversee the implementation of management responses; promote the use of evaluation results for decision-making and improved programming and operations and respond to performance information regarding evaluation. They promote evaluation capacity development and strategies for the adequate financing of evaluations and monitor the allocation of adequate funds by representatives for evaluation.

I. Regional evaluation adviser

41. For the regional evaluation adviser, the regional director provides management oversight and guidance, and the Director of Evaluation provides technical guidance as follows:

(a) Develops and leads in the implementation of a regional strategy and annual work plans for thematic and multi-country evaluations in the region (reports to the regional director);

(b) Provides technical support and quality assurance to the country offices for the planning, management and conduct of evaluations towards the improved timeliness and credibility of evaluation products (reports to the regional director);

(c) Prepares and disseminates reports on the management of the evaluation function to the Regional Evaluation Committee, the Regional Management Team and the Evaluation Office (reports to the regional director);

(d) Contributes to efforts by the Evaluation Office to strengthen technical oversight for evaluation management processes across the organization towards greater responsiveness, improved timeliness and quality and the better utilization of evaluation products in the region (reports to the Director of Evaluation);

(e) Contributes to reinforcing the strategic involvement of UNICEF in national evaluation capacity development and UNDAF evaluation as well as joint evaluations with Governments and other development actors (reports to the regional director);

(f) Provides UNICEF inputs into and coordinates effectively with regional inter-agency evaluation mechanisms, intergovernmental forums and other regional partnerships and organizations relevant to the evaluation function (reports to the regional director);

(g) Contributes to efforts by the Evaluation Office to develop and facilitate the utilization of innovative products and processes in the area of evaluation methodology, evaluation management and the use of evaluations (reports to the Director of Evaluation);

(h) Contributes to efforts by the Evaluation Office to implement initiatives towards the professionalization of the evaluation function (reports to the Director of Evaluation);

(i) Manages country programme evaluations and multi-country thematic evaluations (reports to the regional director);

(j) Keeps abreast of developments in the field of evaluation and knowledge management and provides/coordinates regional contributions and recommendations in connection with the development and implementation of the evaluation policy, global evaluation plan and related strategies and guidance (reports to both the regional director and the Director of Evaluation).

J. Representative

42. At the country level, the representative ensures the upholding of the norms and standards set out in the evaluation policy in the management and conduct of evaluations; the preparation of CEPs that provide timely evaluation evidence for the integration of evaluation into country programme review processes; the skills needed by staff to meet their evaluation accountabilities, including relevant professional development opportunities; and the appropriate integration of evaluation into staff performance reviews.

43. The representative also provides adequate financial and human resources for the implementation of CEPs; oversees the preparation of management responses; monitors action to implement agreed recommendations; promotes the use of evaluation results for decision-making and improved programming; responds to performance information regarding evaluation activities in the country office; works with the United Nations country team to integrate evaluation evidence into the UNDAF and inter-agency work; promotes joint evaluation work with United Nations system entities and other partners, including UNDAF evaluations; advocates for and promotes national evaluation systems; supports efforts to strengthen evaluation capacities in government, parliaments, civil society and other partners, including through Sustainable Development Goals evaluation and reporting; and supervises the evaluation functions of staff members with evaluation management responsibilities.

K. Country office evaluation specialist (or staff assigned to manage evaluations)

44. The country office evaluation specialist²⁴ manages evaluations at the country level in accordance with the evaluation policy norms and standards, including those for quality assurance; compiles the list of intended evaluations to be included in CEPs and annual monitoring and evaluation plans, and applies the UNICEF taxonomy to determine which products are to be treated as evaluations; engages competent evaluators who conduct their work in accordance with the evaluation policy norms and standards; supports the development and implementation of management responses; promotes the use of evaluation results for decision-making and improved programming; and supports the design, implementation and use of country-led evaluations.

IX. System-wide evaluation and partnerships

45. UNICEF will collaborate with other United Nations entities and UNEG to respond to the decisions of Member States regarding system-wide evaluation. The organization will seek out opportunities with other United Nations agencies and, at the country level, in consultation with national Governments, for the joint evaluation of joint programmes, the common chapter of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and the UNDAF, recognizing the benefits of promoting learning within the United Nations system, shared accountability and reduced transaction costs. UNICEF will contribute to the application of UNEG norms and standards in all joint evaluations.

46. UNICEF remains committed to improving its performance against key indicators set out in the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality

²⁴ Or staff assigned to manage evaluations.

and the Empowerment of Women, the aim of which is to ensure that gender analysis is used to inform evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.

47. UNICEF will maintain partnerships in support of the aims of the evaluation policy, including with United Nations agencies, international financial institutions, Governments, evaluation associations, non-governmental organizations, foundations and academic institutions. It will also support the work of UNEG in enhancing partnerships for evaluation.

X. National evaluation capacity development

48. Evaluation in UNICEF follows the organization's commitment to the principles of national ownership and leadership of development processes at the country level. UNICEF seeks to help national authorities to evaluate their own programmes and to contribute to the strengthening of evaluation capacity in countries. Where possible, UNICEF evaluations should be planned and conducted in partnership with national authorities, addressing issues relevant to the national development agenda.

49. In line with General Assembly resolutions 70/1, endorsing the 2030 Agenda, and 69/237, on building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level, and with the 2016 QCPR, UNICEF will continue to support national evaluation capacity development. The organization will focus its support on: (a) strengthening national evaluation systems to be child responsive; (b) the evaluation of actions towards the Sustainable Development Goals, especially those related to the UNICEF mandate; (c) the generation of evidence to inform national processes and reports on progress towards the achievement of the Goals; and (d) advocacy for country-led evaluations and the use of evidence from such evaluations.

50. In addition to working with a range of stakeholders,²⁵ UNICEF will partner, to the extent possible, with national centres of excellence to improve evaluation capacity at the country level.

51. UNICEF will also pursue partnerships with evaluation units of government departments and evaluation agencies to ensure the credible and timely evaluation of child-focused national programmes. Such country-led evaluations may provide the opportunity for UNICEF to support national evaluation capacity development in areas related to the UNICEF mandate.

52. When UNICEF is a partner in, but does not commission or manage, an evaluation, the specific provisions of the present policy do not apply. Nevertheless, UNICEF will promote adherence to international evaluation norms and standards in such situations.

53. A strategy to guide UNICEF support to national evaluation capacity development, in the context of working with other United Nations entities, will be developed by the Evaluation Office and reviewed periodically to ensure that such capacity-development activities remain effective.

²⁵ See para. 45.

XI. Resources

A. Human resources

54. The evaluation function requires skilled human resources to manage evaluations and to provide effective quality assurance. The most significant human-resource requirement is at the country level, where the largest proportion of evaluations is carried out. The Evaluation Office and regional offices will support the identification of consultants by maintaining a quality-controlled roster of evaluators.

55. Country offices should establish adequate capacity for evaluation management. Evaluation responsibilities are often undertaken by staff who also hold other responsibilities, such as monitoring, research and planning. In order to ensure dedicated evaluation positions, country offices may decide (in large programmes) to establish an evaluation specialist post, while smaller offices may pool resources with other UNICEF offices to fund a multi-country post dedicated to evaluation. Where such arrangements are not possible, staff with responsibility for evaluation should be supported by the representative to devote adequate time to evaluation duties and to report on them to the representative. Arrangements should be made by the representative to ensure the integrity of the evaluation function, in particular the application of the provisions of the evaluation policy.

56. Regional offices will have at least one P5-level staff member fully dedicated to evaluation activities. Incumbents must meet the requirements of the UNEG competency framework. A significant responsibility of the regional evaluation adviser will be to provide technical assistance and quality assurance for country-level evaluations. Such services may be provided directly by the regional evaluation adviser or through long-term agreements or similar arrangements with consultants or centres of excellence.

57. The Evaluation Office staff, including its Director at the D2 level, will meet the requirements of the UNEG competency framework. The Director of Evaluation will ensure that the staff of the Evaluation Office and the regional evaluation adviser have evaluation management and leadership skills and experience aligned with UNEG evaluation competencies.

58. All staff with evaluation responsibilities will undergo capacity development arranged by the Evaluation Office to improve their professional skills, including on gender-based analysis, human rights approaches and results-based management. Additional opportunities for professional development will be identified with a view to ensuring that evaluation staff demonstrate core competencies as outlined in the UNEG Evaluation Competency Framework. Training opportunities and technical support in evaluation will be provided for programme managers.

59. Where feasible, UNICEF will support staff in the pursuit of a career in evaluation by ensuring the possibility of rotation across evaluation positions.

B. Financial resources

60. High-quality evaluations and the evaluation function more broadly require the necessary investment of financial resources. Globally, to meet minimum evaluation coverage in accordance with the evaluation policy, UNICEF will allocate at least 1 per cent of its overall programme expenditure to evaluation. Planning studies, monitoring, surveys and research must be financed separately from evaluation. The Evaluation Office and regional offices will monitor expenditure on evaluation globally and in their respective regions, with the objective of achieving that target.

61. In country offices, resource allocation decisions for evaluations are based on the CEP. Budget allocations for evaluation should reflect the aims set out in the CEP.

62. Regional offices and the Evaluation Office should follow similar steps in mobilizing support for regional plans and the plan for global evaluations.

63. The Executive Director will establish a pooled fund to support evaluation capacity development, including for conducting and managing evaluations, especially at the decentralized level; professionalization throughout the organization; innovation in evaluation; and strategic evaluations. By emphasizing capacity development, the pooled fund will promote an enabling environment for offices to invest more in evaluation towards the organizational goal of at least 1 per cent of programme expenditure.

XII. Risks

64. The theory of change identifies several risks to achieving expected outputs and outcomes of the evaluation function. The Director of Evaluation will work with the management of UNICEF to continue to promote and support evaluation within the organization, and to ensure adequate and sustainable funding for the evaluation function. The Evaluation Office will work with all levels of the organization to support the adoption and application of norms and standards for other complementary functions and to support the development of an evidence-based culture within the organization. The greater use of evaluability assessments will help to ensure that programmes are evaluable. Most difficult to address is the risk of insufficient evaluation experts, especially at the country level. This risk will be mitigated by support to national evaluation capacity development, enhancing the skills of UNICEF evaluation staff and the use of rosters to undertake quality evaluations.

XIII. Implementation, reporting and review

65. UNICEF will issue appropriate instructions to carry forward the effective implementation of the evaluation policy, including an executive directive outlining implementation responsibilities. Guidance will be issued by the Evaluation Office to complement the policy.

66. The status of implementation of the evaluation policy will be reported by the Director of Evaluation to the Executive Board as part of the annual report on the evaluation function, which will include: (a) progress towards achieving the outputs identified in the theory of change for the evaluation function, including evaluation capacity development; (b) a presentation of the evaluations, evaluation activities and achievements of the Evaluation Office during the previous year and the programme of work for the current and following year;²⁶ (c) a factual description of evaluations undertaken by other parts of the organization, together with an assessment of the status, quality and utility of the evaluations; (d) progress on the status of implementation of actions agreed in management responses to evaluations; (e) a synthesis of the main findings, conclusions and lessons from evaluations of the performance of UNICEF, including evaluations of the performance of the evaluation function; and (f) an examination of challenges met on methodologies for conducting evaluations, and approaches and processes, particularly as they relate to the use of evaluations.

²⁶ This will also reflect on achievements relating to the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

67. The annual report on the evaluation function in UNICEF will be accompanied by a management response, also presented to the Executive Board.

68. An independent review on the performance of the policy will be required. It is therefore proposed that such a review be undertaken in 2022.

Annex

22/22

Theory of change for the evaluation function in UNICEF

The theory of change for the evaluation function in UNICEF outlines how evaluative activities will contribute to UNICEF and its partners delivering on attaining the Sustainable Development Goals and the targets of the Strategic Plan and supporting the progressive realization of the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged. The theory of change will inform indicators for the evaluation function.

